Autumn Siska

A Time I Helped Somebody

Last year, I helped clean up a cemetery in downtown Johnstown. It was an ecology club activity at Bishop Mccort High School. Even though I was not in ecology club, I participated in it anyways. It started out as a way for me to get out of class, but ended up being more than just that. I now consider it an important growing experience.

It all started when my geometry teacher asked my class one day if we would like to volunteer to help the ecology club clean up the cemetery. At first, nobody raised their hands. Then he added – “It will get you out of class tomorrow…” A bunch of hands shot up following these words, including mine.

The next morning, I reported to the cafeteria dressed in old jeans and a tee shirt, carrying my permission slip and a brown bag lunch. After all the slips had been collected, we departed from the cafeteria and began to walk to the cemetery, which was about at 15 or 20 minute walk.

When we arrived at the cemetery, everyone looked around in dismay. Groans of “Aww man, why did I do this?” could be heard. It was in worse shape than we had expected. The grass was high, and the graves were overgrown with weeds. Thankfully, the ladies from the garden club were there to help us. They gave us tools to use, as well as instructing us on how to properly clean the cemetery.

As the day went on, and the sun rose, it got swelteringly hot out. Around noon, we sat in the shade of the trees and ate our lunches, but it wasn’t long before we returned to cleaning. In spite of the heat, we continued to work, trimming the grass and pulling up weeds until it was time to start heading back. The garden club ladies warmly thanked us and then got a photograph with our group. We returned to school in time to catch the bus.

It was hard work, but in the end it was worth it. I am glad I helped clean the cemetery. I felt gratified that I was one of the people that helped the garden club ladies make to cemetery beautiful again although we didn’t receive anything in return for it. But, weeks after we cleaned the cemetery, we discovered that an article had been written about us in the newspaper, once again with thanks from the garden club, along with the picture that had been taken that day.